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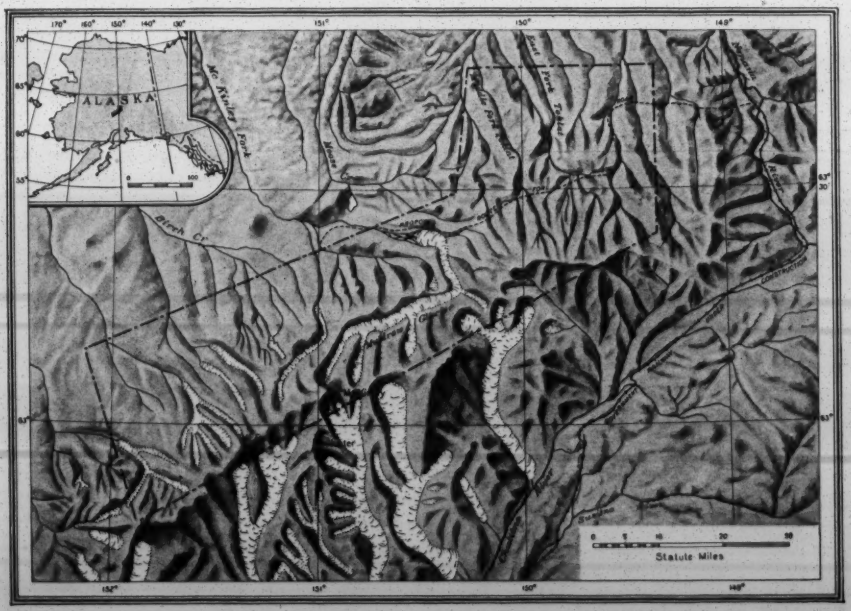

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MAP OF MOUNT McKINLEY NATIONAL PARK

(See Bulletin No. 2)

HOW TO OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

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Afghanistan: Buffer State Between India and Siberia

CAPTURE of an Afghanistan border post by Russian troops raises the old ghost of invasion into India across the northwest frontier. Ever since strong Russian influence spread through Siberia to the borders of Afghanistan fear of the capture of Khyber or one of the other famous passes has been a concern of Englishmen who are watchful of the state of the British Commonwealth.

The penetration of progress into Burma on the eastern limits of India (see Bulletin No. 5) cannot offer the startling contrasts to be found in Afghanistan. Until a few years ago foreign travelers were unwelcome in the mountain buffer state. As late as 1922 the visit of an Englishman to Kabul, the capital, without any official reason to bring him there, excited considerable comment in London papers.

But now even on the ancient roads motorcycles and automobiles are beginning to take the place of the swift Arab steeds which traveled the mountain passes, and Afghans or "men of the hills" are beginning to smack their lips over prospects of visiting Vienna, Paris, London, or New York.

Fenced By Geography

For the first time in the history of the country, recent reports declare that the printing press has put in its appearance and that periodicals are actually daring to show their faces. A school for women has been opened at Kabul, and five years ago slavery was abolished.

Geography played the major rôle in isolating the Afghan kingdom from the outside world, and patriotic and religious fanaticism have been strong supports in the cast. Without exaggeration, the entire country may be said to lie within sight of the everlasting hills. From the Oxus, which time out of mind was the boundary between the great monarchies of southwestern Asia and the nomads of the central Asian steppes, it runs to the deserts of Baluchistan, which shut it off from the sea. From the Persian frontier on the west it extends through outlying spurs to the foot of the very Himalayas themselves.

And those rugged and unprofitable heights have produced men who fear neither God nor man. The Afridis, who live in the vicinity of the great Khyber and Kohat Passes between their native country and India, are powerful, independent, treacherous and ferocious. They hide in the seams of the hills and pick off with their trusty muskets travelers on the roads below.

Valleys Resemble Vale of Kashmir

Though the Amir is now one of the few absolute monarchs of the earth, his tribesmen know no law but force. An Afghan chief may promise a stranger safe conduct through his territory and he will stick to his word, but in the meantime he has probably entered into an agreement with a neighboring chief for kidnapping the visitor as soon as he has entered the next territory. Though the "keep out" sign is not to be seen, travelers are aware soon that their welcome is chilly.

Vengeance among the Afghans is usually swift and punishment severe. Thieves are often hung, not mercifully by a rope, but in cages suspended

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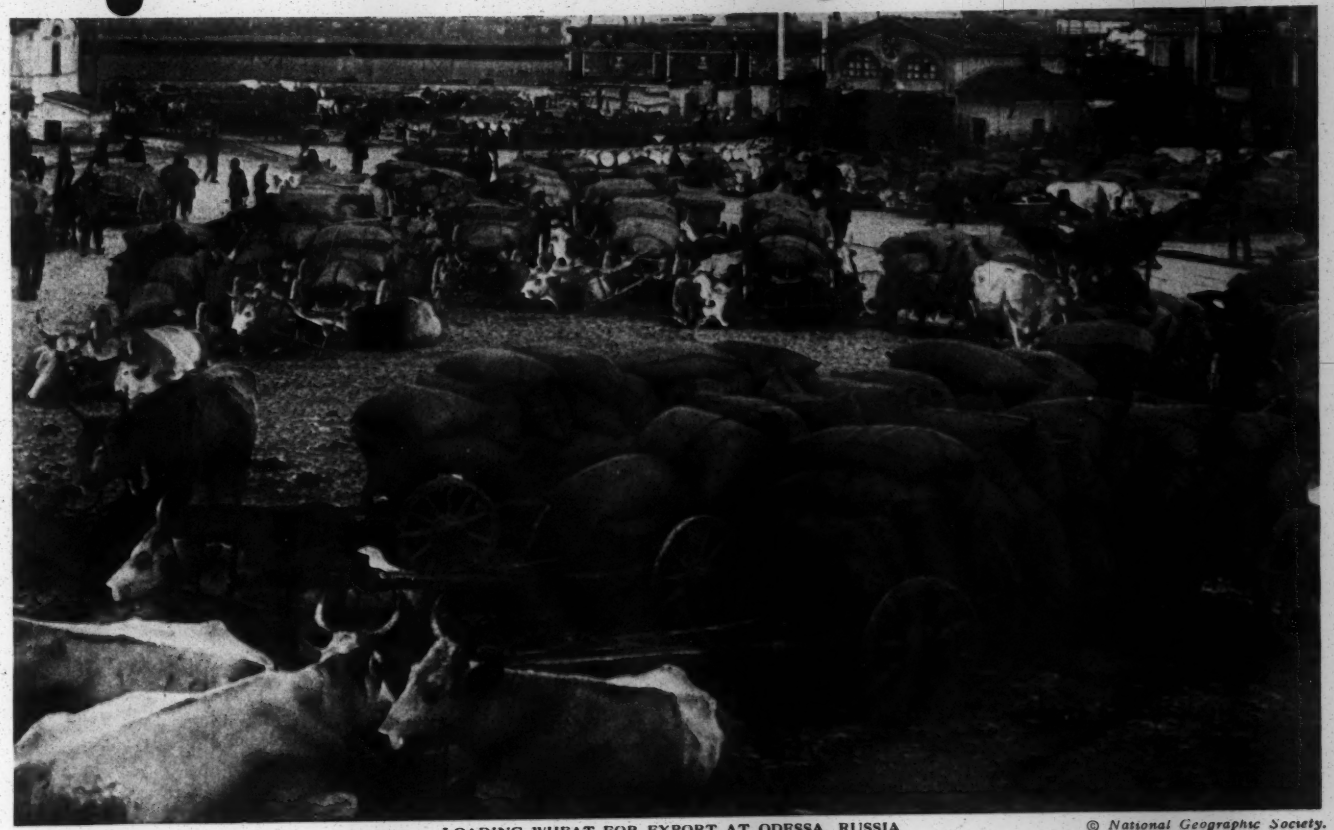

LOADING WHEAT FOR EXPORT AT ODESSA, RUSSIA

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The city lies near the great rivers, the Dnieper and the Dniester, which made it one of the great grain ports of the world in the days before the World War when Russia was a major factor in the wheat marts (see Bulletin No. 4).

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Mount McKinley: Scene of Volcanic Activity

IF THE REPORT of volcanic activity on Mount McKinley is true the phenomenon is a special invitation to the people of the United States to come and see a great spectacle, because the loftiest peak on the North American continent is the prime exhibit of McKinley National Park.

Mount McKinley is the anchor on the land end of a long line of volcanoes stretching out along the Aleutian peninsula. This firing battery is one of the most active volcano fields in the world. Five hundred miles south of Mount McKinley is Mount Katmai, whose explosion in 1912 created the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. This latter region has also been set aside for the public as Katmai National Monument.

In scenic grandeur the stupendous mass of which Mount McKinley is the highest pinnacle has no rival. The snow-line here lies at about 7,000 feet, and above that elevation only a few sharp crags and seemingly perpendicular cliffs are free from the glistening white mantle. From the valley of McKinley Fork, which is at the north base of the mountain and lies at an elevation of only 1,500 feet, the bare rocks of the lower mountains extend upward for about 5,500 feet, and above them Mount McKinley rises in majestic whiteness to a height of 20,300 feet—the loftiest peak on the continent.

Mount Foraker Companion to Mount McKinley

The upper 13,000 feet of the mountain is clad in glaciers and perpetual snows, thus offering to the mountaineer the highest climb above snow-line in the world. The rise of 18,000 feet from the lower end of Peters Glacier, north of the mountain, to the highest peak, is made in a distance of only 13 miles. In no other mountain mass do we find so great a vertical ascent in so short a distance. The peaks of the Colorado Rockies, though wonderful, rise from a high plateau, so that at most points from which they can be seen they stand only 7,000 or, at most, 8,000 feet above the observer. Mount St. Elias, an 18,000-foot mountain, may be seen from sea-level, but the peak stands 35 miles from the coast, and so loses in height to the eye by the distance from which it must be viewed.

Similarly the high volcanic peaks of Mexico and South America and the world's loftiest mountains in the Himalayas rise from high plateaus, which diminish by their own elevation the visible magnitude and towering height of their culminating peaks.

Southwest of Mount McKinley, 15 miles away from it, stands Mount Foraker, only 3,300 feet lower and almost equally imposing. If it stood alone, Mount Foraker would be famous in its own right as a mighty peak, having few equals; but in the presence of its giant neighbor it is reduced to secondary rank.

These two dominating peaks, standing side by side and known to the interior natives as Donali and Donali's Wife, far outflank the flanking mountains to the northeast and southwest, among which, however, there are a score of other peaks that rise to heights between 7,000 and 14,000 feet, well above snow-line, and that are the gathering ground for many glaciers.

from tall poles where they are left to die of hunger. These man-cages often greet one along the lonely mountain passes.

Some of this wild land is exceedingly beautiful, resembling the famous Vale of Kashmir, the land of Lalla Rookh. Areas around the headwaters of the Kabul River, the most important river in the kingdom, have never been explored by Europeans since the days when Alexander made his way to India.

The Bazaar of Kabul

One of the most interesting sights in Kabul, the capital and largest city (population 150,000), is its covered bazaar, or street of shops, similar to the Street called Straight in Damascus. In its mazes, struggling, burdened, sweating masses of humanity, donkeys, camels, beggars and dogs meet and mingle amid the pungent odors of foods and the welter of midday. Only occasionally does the crowd part—when some important personage dashes through at a swift pace, the approved method of showing his distinction.

If one can stand the fetid atmosphere of the bazaar he can acquire anything from a Kashmir shawl or an ivory-handled dagger to a copper coin of the time of Alexander the Great or unwashed grapes, cantaloupes and pomegranates.

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COSTUME OF AN AFGHAN WOMAN OF THE UPPER CLASSES

The wealthy Afghan woman wears a round cap embroidered with gold thread. The hair, parted in the middle, is arranged in tiny braids caught in a black silk embroidered bag worn under the gold cap. Married women wear a fringe of hair, often curled on each side of the face.

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The Virgin Islands: Our $25,000,000 Triplets

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS have registered a strong protest against the suggestion that they be attached to Porto Rico. The plan was brought forward in the interest of having one arm of the United States Government in this sector of the West Indies instead of two.

The Virgin Islands are hardly more than a stone's throw from Porto Rico. St. Thomas, the westernmost of the three larger Virgins, is only 40 miles from that island, and the presence of Culebra Island, belonging to Porto Rico, midway between the two, ties the new possessions still more closely to this elder American brother by geographical adoption. The truly beautiful view that may be had from the 1,500-foot peak of hilly St. Thomas includes to the west the dim outline of the Porto Rican coast.

St. John, the smallest of the three principal islands acquired by the United States, lies only two miles to the east of St. Thomas. A climb to the rugged hills of St. John will demonstrate that the American Virgins are also not remote from foreign territory. A mile to the north lies Thatch Island, a small bit of land belonging to Great Britain, and less than three miles in the same direction is Tortola Island of the British Virgins, almost as large as St. John.

A Duplicate of Manhattan

St. Croix, the largest of the islands purchased in 1917, lies 40 miles to the south. It is not a part geographically of the Virgin group, but was included with St. Thomas and St. John for administrative purposes by the Danes and is classed by the United States as one of its Virgin Islands. St. Croix is a little over three times the size of Manhattan Island, containing approximately 84 square miles. St. Thomas, with an area of 28 square miles, is about 14 miles long and has an average width not much over two miles. It is therefore almost exactly the size of Manhattan Island. St. John has an extreme length of 8 miles and a width somewhat over two miles. Its area is approximately 20 square miles. The entire group, including the numerous tiny islands of small value, has little more than twice the area of the District of Columbia, the smallest of the main divisions of the United States proper.

For these islands the United States paid a higher price per acre than for any other of its famous purchases. Only 3 cents an acre was paid for Alaska, 14 for Florida, and 27 for the Philippines. The Canal Zone cost $35.83 per acre. The price per acre paid for the Virgin Islands was approximately $295.

The features that give the chief value to the islands from the point of view of the United States Government are St. Thomas Harbor, on which is situated the principal town of the group, St. Thomas; and Coral Bay on the Island of St. John. St. Thomas Harbor is probably the best developed harbor in the West Indies, and is naturally protected except from exceptionally strong hurricanes. Coral Bay, though entirely undeveloped, constitutes an even more commodious and better protected harbor of refuge. These harbors were valuable to the United States in themselves, but it was even more important that the United States prevent their falling into the hands of possible enemies.

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Nenana Coal Field Nearby

Of the glaciers that the tourist visits in the park the largest and most accessible is Muldrow Glacier. This ice-tongue, 39 miles long, flows from the summit of Mount McKinley and makes a great fish-hook curve to the northeast and north.

Not the least impressive feature of this part of the Alaska Range is the tremendous scale upon which the foundations of the earth are exposed to view. Especially in the valley heads, where vegetation is sparse or lacking, the high mountain ridges, cut by deep valleys, offer impressive sections for the study of the earth's structure.

Here great lava flows and volcanic intrusions, in vivid shades of red, purple, brown and green, will tax the color box of the artist. Masses of sedimentary rocks, first deposited as flat-lying beds, but now standing vertical or twisted into giant folds, give a hint of the Titan forces that build a mountain range.

And near the eastern border of the park, at the Nenana coal field, the traveler can see how Nature, by her generous placing and preservation of coal within the rocks, makes possible the industrial prosperity of the nation by furnishing the fuel needed for its manufactures.

A Region Untouched by Civilization

The Mount McKinley region was one of the last chances which the people of the United States had to preserve, untouched by civilization, a great primeval park in its natural beauty. Historically this country is relatively new. It was not until 1897 that W. A. Dickey, after having explored in the upper Susitna basin the previous summer, published a description of Mount McKinley, made his remarkably accurate estimate of 20,000 feet as the height of the mountain, and gave it the name it now bears. In 1898 the first actual survey in the neighborhood of the park was made near its east side by George E. Eldridge and Robert Muldrow, of the United States Geological Survey. In 1899 an army expedition, in charge of Capt. Joseph H. Herron, explored a part of the area near the southwestern boundary of the park.

The highest peak remained unconquered until 1913, when, on March 17, Archdeacon Hudson Stuck, Harry Karstens, and two companions left the mouth of Nenana River, traveled by dog sled to the Kantishna district to pick up supplies landed there by boat in the fall of 1912, and proceeded to the basin of Clearwater Fork, at the north base of Mount McKinley. After preparing their own pemmican from wild game obtained near camp, they began the actual ascent about the middle of April and reached the peak on June 7, 1913. Thus the mountain summit was scaled seventeen years after its first adequate description was published.

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Odessa Again Becoming Great Russian Port

TRADE REPORTS show a great increase of commerce between the United States and Russia. Since the Soviet territories are cut off from the lower end of the Baltic by the new states, it is natural that Russian commerce should turn to the Black Sea, and it is natural that Odessa should begin to regain its prosperous standing as a great port.

Many shipments of American goods, and even foodstuffs, reach Russia via Odessa. Only recently a large shipment of hides started for Odessa from South America.

If we were to ship to Odessa at this time of the year we would find that the hotels and private houses put up their double doors and windows and go through the entire winter without once opening an aperture unless it proves necessary to come in or go out of the house. Some say that the inhabitants even go so far as to stop up all the cracks with cotton batting. To American and English fresh-air enthusiasts a reception in Odessa during the winter season is not exactly a pleasure.

Christian Leaders Leave Odessa for Palestine

The Odessans have another peculiarity which strikes the average comfort-loving American as the acme of queerness. The men, particularly the army officers, wear their winter overcoats all during the summer season regardless of how hot it gets. It is hard to imagine a dashing captain of the cavalry equipped in the outfit which he is supposed to wear into the frozen north, promenading down the main boulevard with a charming young girl clad in a dainty summer frock.

The gay city—for it had the reputation of being one before the war—had its pathos. It was one of the main embarkation points for the thousands of Russian pilgrims who each year left their country for the Holy Land. Many of them, old men and women who never expected to see their native land again, and knew that they were probably on their last earthly journey, marched on foot hundreds of miles to Odessa.

But mad-cap and merry the city usually is to all outward appearances. In its streets, which are well paved and nearly always shaded with long lines of trees, the people laugh and lunch in the most light-hearted fashion. Few of them have real homes. They live in apartments attached to their places of business. Behind a hardware store, a bakery or a shoeshop, or adjoining the offices of a lawyer or an insurance agent you will find the rooms in which his family is living, and the public restaurant is the family dining room.

Shipped Fourth of Russia's Export of Wheat

One-third of Odessa's inhabitants are Jews, and their initiative and business acumen have earned for them the most responsible places in most of the industrial enterprises in the city, as well as the prejudice of the native Russians.

When evening drops her cloak over the city, the night is filled with music, and the cares that infested the day, if there ever were any, steal away like the Arabs in the poem. The farmer from the Middle West or the manufacturer

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Two Harbors "On the Road to Everywhere"

The Greater Antilles, made up of the larger of the West Indies, and the Lesser Antilles, composed of the smaller islands, together form a gigantic crooked arm enclosing the Caribbean Sea. The Virgin Islands are at the "elbow," the closest point to Europe. Past this point streams the traffic between Europe and the Panama Canal, between New York and both the east and west coasts of South and Central America, and between the Greater and the Lesser Antilles. It has been said of St. Thomas Harbor and the town of St. Thomas that they are "on the road to everywhere." To this fact has been due the importance of the town; and the town in turn has given to the islands of St. Thomas and St. John what importance they have had in recent years. Its accessibility, its good harbor, its facilities for coaling and storage, and for dry dockage and repairs to steamers, gave Charlotte Amalie, as the Danes called St. Thomas, a place of preeminence among all the harbors of the West Indies before the war. The falling off of shipping during the war was a hard blow to its prosperity.

In November, 1917, soon after they were taken over by the United States, the American Virgin Islands had a population of slightly more than 26,000. This was not a great deal over half the population in 1835.

Bulletin No. 3, January 25, 1926.

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BLACKBEARD'S CASTLE ABOVE ST. THOMAS

Though legend tells us that here the famous Blackbeard lay in security, ready to pounce upon any ship that ventured near the harbor, the fort was probably built by the governor, during the latter part of the seventeenth century (see Bulletin No. 3).

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Burma: Land of the Cheroot

ABOLITION of the last remnants of slavery in Burma is the object of a British expedition which has gone into the Hukwang valley. Liberal prices will be paid to the owners for freeing slaves.

The banishment of slavery is quite in the spirit of modern progress in Burma where the old order of things has been passing, and new ideas and manners from the western world are gradually seeping into the Oriental mind. With the old order are disappearing many picturesque and amusing customs.

Perhaps the most noticeable detail of the Burmese men, women, and children's appearance is the inevitable "whackin' white cheroot." It is said that a mother often transfers her lighted cigar from her own mouth to that of the wee child in her arms; and no lady would start on a dress parade without taking a necessary stock of "smokes" to supply her while she is out. This cheroot is more like an overgrown cigarette than anything else, and is said to contain but a small portion of the real tobacco leaf.

The Lords of the White Elephant

Another Burman custom common to boys, girls, men and women is kun-chewing. The Burman has been said to smoke between chews and chew between smokes, but to have little time for anything else. The betel nut is chopped fine, a red lime paste is spread on a certain kind of strong-flavored leaf and all are jammed into the mouth together. Then the chewing begins. To extract the last bit of flavor from the combination, the chewer contorts his face while his cheeks puff out more and more, until finally discomfort compels him to start again with a fresh supply.

The Burman has a pride that makes him, in his own estimation, second to none on earth. He is descended from angels who came on earth and gradually adopted the ways of human beings. His kings, before the days of Thebaw and his queen, Supiyawlat, had complete power over their subjects and wore a list of titles which make the letter abbreviations of orders after the name of a British celebrity seem few by comparison. These potentates were content, however, to be known as "Lords of the White Elephant," for short.

There is no elaborate caste system among the Burmas like that which proves a curse among the Hindus, but certain classes are outcasts; the pagoda servant remains a semi-slave generation in and generation out; a grave digger never hopes to rise above his occupation and his benighted social position; and the lepers, beggars and the deformed or maimed are believed to suffer the stigma of some terrible sin of a former existence.

Women's Status in Burma

As strict Buddhists these people are not supposed to take life in any form, special and uncomfortable purgatories being reserved for fishermen and hunters; but few of them manifest any unwillingness to eat the quarry when it is served as food.

One respect in which the Burmese shine as a people among the other Orientals is in the position of their women. Though they consider a man far superior to a woman, and though her fondest hope is that she may be born to

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from New England would be inclined to wonder if these night revelers ever did any work, so late into the night do they laugh, talk and play, but by the early forenoon business is humming in the marts of men, as it does in any other big city.

About twenty years ago Odessa shipped out yearly through the Black Sea nearly three million tons of grain or about one-fourth of that exported from Russia, but she failed to keep apace with invention in her freight-handling machinery and Nikolaief, Kherson and Rostof-on-the-Don sapped the influx of produce which was the life-blood of the city. Sebastopol, too, has been one of the factors working against Odessa. The harbor of the former city is one of the best on the Black Sea, and has the advantage that it never freezes, while that of Odessa is ice-clogged for two or three weeks every winter.

A New Town As Russia Knows Them

Odessa is one of the newest towns of any importance in Russia. In 1810, according to the first census taken, its population was 9,000. But it is located on a bay near the northwest curve of the Black Sea, not far from the mouths of the Dnieper and the Dniester Rivers, and it grew rapidly. When Turkey ceded this area to Russia, Catherine the Great decided that she would develop the little Turkish fortress called Khodjabey into a mighty city, which would prove an important Russian base near the hated Constantinople. So Odessa had its beginnings.

Bulletin No. 4, January 25, 1926.

Form for Renewal of Bulletin Requests

Many requests for the GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS were made for the year ending with this issue. If you desire the Bulletins continued kindly notify The Society promptly. The attached form may be used:

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this high estate in some future existence, she walks the streets in absolute freedom and puffs her cheroot to her heart's content. She takes part in, and quite often has complete charge of, the business affairs of the family, retailing her wares in a stall in a bazaar or market, figuring her accounts in her head—for she never has any schooling—and meeting her husband's friends on the same plane with him in the household.

Courtship in Burma is more open than it is in almost any other part of the East. The young man usually manifests his interest at one of the pagoda feasts by shy attentions; he then calls in company with his boy friends to find out that the young lady with a bevy of her friends is awaiting him. He means business, however, and if the families consent he persuades her to eat a meal with him in public, and by virtue of this act his bachelorhood is brought to an abrupt end.

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WITH ALL HIS WORLDLY GOODS HE HER ENDOWS

The unmarried man of certain primitive tribes of Burma wears a pebble necklace which has been handed down from father to son for generations; large brass rings encircle his neck, hang from his ears, and are inserted in his cotton garters. All this finery goes to his wife when he gets one. The husbands of these two matrons were evidently well provided with such valuables when they renounced bachelorhood (see Bulletin No. 5).